

Occidental Building  
107-111 North Wacker Drive;  
northeast corner of North Wacker  
Drive and West Washington Street  
Chicago  
Cook County  
Illinois

HABS No. ILL-1028

HABS  
ILL,  
16-CHIG,  
29-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Washington Planning and Service Center  
1730 North Lynn Street  
Arlington, Virginia

## OCCIDENTAL BUILDING

HABS  
ILL,  
16-CHIG,  
29-

Location: 107-111 North Wacker Drive; northeast corner of North Wacker Drive and West Washington Street, Chicago, Illinois.

Present Owner: Garrett Biblical Institute, 2121 Sheridan Road, Evanston, Illinois.

Present Occupant: Office tenants.

Present Use: Office building and light manufacturing.

Statement of Significance: This is an example of a large, late nineteenth century brick building, designed by John Van Osdel, II.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: Legal description of the property: Lot 5 of Block 42 in Original Town of Chicago in southeast quarter section 9-39-14.

(For the complete chain of title see Book 455 New in the Cook County Recorder's Office.) The property had been in the Freer estate for almost 50 years. It was first purchased by Nathan M. Freer from Samuel Page on May 7, 1876 (Document 75570). The Occidental Building was built for L. C. Paine Freer (Document 2202033), April 15, 1895. On November 30, 1922 the Occidental Building Corporation is first mentioned in the chain of title (Document 7446343). On November 24, 1925 the ownership of the property was taken over by the Garrett Biblical Institute who have continued as owners (Document 16553878).

2. Date of erection: 1895.
3. Architect: John Van Osdel, II (born 1837). The building was designed by the nephew of John Van Osdel, Sr., the first architect to practice in Chicago. Van Osdel, II joined his uncle's office in 1861 and became a junior partner in 1871. See A. T. Andreas, History of Chicago (Chicago: Published by the author, 1886) for additional information.
4. Builder, suppliers, etc.: The original cost was approximately \$221,510. Major construction was by W. H. Mortimer (masonry, carpentry, iron, terra cotta). For a complete list of building costs and supplies see Supplemental Material below.

5. Original plans, construction, etc.: Early published views of the proposed building depict a structure composed of two identical office blocks joined by an entry structure. This plan was modified so that the present building is a single, large office block. The present building is eight stories and one basement, on spread foundations.
6. Alterations and additions: Another building, the Occidental Annex, was added to the east of the original Occidental Building. It is built of the same brick, but does not attempt to copy the design of its namesake. Architect and date unknown.

B. Bibliography:

Chicago Central Business and Office Building Directory.

Chicago: The Winters Publishing Co., 1916. p. 184.  
Photograph and description.

Ericson, Henry. Sixty Years a Builder. Chicago: A. Kroch and Son, Publishers, 1942. p. 110.

Inland Architect. Vol. XXV, No. 5 (June, 1895).  
Preliminary scheme for entrance.

Inland Architect. Vol. XXV, No. 6 (July, 1895).  
Preliminary scheme for complete structure.

Randall, Frank A. History of the Development of Building Construction in Chicago. Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1949. p. 142.

Schaefer, Conrad Bryant. A Quarter Century of Chicago Architecture. John Mills Van Osdel. Chicago: A. L. Swift & Co., 1898.

Included is a preliminary scheme for the Occidental Building which depicts a proposed structure of the two office blocks joined by a three-story entry on North Wacker Drive.

C. Supplemental Material:

1. Extract from a letter received from Dr. Archibald Freer, dated Leipzig, Germany, August 18, 1895. A typed copy included in Schaefer, op. cit., in the Burnham Library at the Chicago Art Institute:

"The cut of the Occidental Building, I showed yesterday to the most celebrated civil engineer in Germany, and it is greatly admired on account of its massiveness and the harmony of its proportions. It is really the only high building in Chicago, which does not look like a monstrosity."

2. The following is extracted from Van Osdel, John M. "Account Books," Vol. 3, 1886-1900, pp. 87-88, in the manuscript collections of the Chicago Historical Society. Material from these manuscripts may not be used for publication without permission from the Trustees of the Chicago Historical Society, Clark Street and North Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Occidental Building. Market and Washington Street. -  
L. C. Paine Freer, 1895.

p. 87, [penciled notes]

Steel construction	51700.
Extra Concrete	2650.
Tie Rods	1282.
Strips and clamps	2428.
Court partitions	206.
Strips on beams	200.
Cutting dim stone	21.63
Moving old boiler	25.
Fred Voss	995.

May 2/99 Paid Extra sewer around etc.	22.50
Basin cover	3.00
Well cover	<u>5.55</u>
	31.05

Apr. 28-96.

1484.52.	Mortimer
1058.	John Tait
2500.	S. Walk
22038.)	Pioneer
1125.)	
1239.	J.J. Wade
175.	McCarthy
4427.	Iron stairs
177.	Iron guards
289.	Sky light
3100.	Passenger
4202.	Prismatic Lts.
2393.	Plumbing
2490.	Freight
1335.	SW Freight Elevator
1470.	Store Fronts
11000.	Heating
3275.	Stillwell Bierce
995.	Fred Voss
5130.50	Danchy Iron Work
3115.	Roofing
296.75	Hall concrete
340.	Iron gates & (Booth)
288.	(about) Partition Toilet Room
600.	Plumbing fixtures.
<u>221510.25</u>	

<u>p. 88</u> <u>Kind of work</u>	<u>Contractor</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Masonry, Carpentry Iron Terra Cotta	W. A. Mortimer	\$129000.
<u>Cut Stone</u>	John Tait	1058.
<u>Plastering</u>	Mortimer	4495.
Stone		
Sidewalk	Western Stone Co.	2500.
Storm partition:		
<u>Carpentry</u>	A. Anderson & Co.	245.
Tile floors	Pioneer Co.	22038.
	Extra	1125.
<u>Draining</u>	J. J. Wade	1239.
<u>Painting</u>	W. H. Mortimer	699.
oiling fronts	J. G. McCarthy	175.
<u>Glass</u>	W. H. Mortimer	3180.
Iron stairs	Chicago Ornamental	4427.
Grill		
<u>Iron Work</u>	Fred Voss	995.
Iron Guards	Chicago Ornamental Co.	169.50
		7.50
<u>Galv. Iron</u>	James A. Miller & Co.	289.
Passenger Elevator	Eaton & Prince	3100.
Iron Doors	Danchy Iron Works	5130.50
		20.
		20.
		7.50
Pris. Lights	Danchy Iron Works	4202.
<u>Plumbing</u>	Foskett & Brown	2393.85
Extra	" "	611.45
floor deafing	Mortimer	2650.
Freight <u>Elevators</u>	Eaton & Prince	2490.
store fronts	Winslow Bros.	1470.
Heating	R. H. Thomas	11000.

Boilers Stillwell Bierce & 3100.  
Co.

Extras about penciled 120.  
note 75.

Prepared by Larry J. Homolka  
Historian  
National Park Service  
Osmond Overby  
Supervisory Architect  
National Park Service  
August 1963

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. This is a large, simple, brick commercial building, with tall round arches similar to the Romanesque forms used by Root and Sullivan.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

### B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: About 70' (south side) x 170' (west front); eight stories plus basement; 19 bays on west (front) side, spaced in groups of 2 and one center group of 3; eight bays on south side in groups of 2.
2. Layout-shape: Rectangular.
3. Foundations: Spread foundations. Light gray, smooth-faced granite foundation wall shows above grade.
4. Wall construction: On the west (front) and south sides, the first two floors are treated as a basement story, faced in dull red terra cotta; the rusticated piers between bays alternate flat smooth blocks with curved-faced blocks. Bays on first and second floors are twice as wide as on upper floors. A molded cornice separates first and second floors and a modillioned cornice the second and third floors. Upper floors of smooth-faced, dull-red molded brick. Floors three through seven are treated as a tall arcade; the bays are separated by continuous brick piers, finished with semi-circular, rusticated arches; alternate piers are slightly wider to achieve the paired grouping. The eighth, or top floor, unarticulated brick wall with simple row of rectangular window openings. The

north wall is rough common-bond brick; the east is a party-wall.

5. Openings:

- a. The main entrance is at the center of the west (front) side at the three-bay group; a foliated name plaque in the frieze over the entrance is made of terra cotta. The doors are later additions.
- b. Windows and shutters: Double-hung, wooden windows are mostly one-over-one-light sash; some are two-over-two-light. The store windows on the first floor are two bays wide. Paired windows on the second floor are framed with small, freely Corinthian colonettes. The seventh-floor windows have semi-circular upper sash at the top of the arcaded wall treatment.

6. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Flat.
- b. Cornice: Has been removed.

C. Description of Interiors:

Ground floor shops open onto the street. The main entrance at the center of the west (front) side leads to the hallway with stairway and elevators to upper floors. All the interiors have been remodeled.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The building faces west at the northeast corner of North Wacker Drive and West Washington Street in an older commercial area of downtown Chicago. It occupies a nearly level lot with an alley on the north side and an adjoining building on the east.
2. Enclosures: None.
3. Outbuildings: The Occidental Annex has been added on the east side, but is not part of the original structure.
4. Walks: The building abuts public sidewalks on the west (front) and south sides.
5. Landscaping: None.

Prepared by Osmund Overby  
Supervisory Architect  
National Park Service  
August 1963